


# Minnesota's Un-aligned Early Childhood Landscape:

Lessons and Opportunities from Higher Ed

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# Core Assumptions

- Un-aligned systems prevent *any* system from accomplishing its full potential (Education, Care, and Professional Preparation)
- Children's early years—especially prenatally to age 5—are the most critical time in a child's development.
- Early Childhood is a unique field of study with specialized knowledge and competencies. It is DIFFERENT from Elementary Education.
- Higher Education's role in Minnesota's early childhood landscape is to prepare/support professionals to serve the needs of young children and their families.
- NOW is the time for all of us to capitalize on the public interest and investment in early childhood by mobilizing our resources to serve young children and their families.

# Lay of the Land

(The exciting stuff)

- This is an exciting and formative time in our field of Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC).
- Current neuroscience research informs our understanding of early development and the critical nature of positive early learning experiences for young children and their families.
- This knowledge and growing public discussion gives energy to a vibrant Minnesota ECEC system.



# Lay of the Land

the challenging stuff

MN's oversight of Early Childhood Education and Care resides in two separate systems; separate from IHE

The result: confusion and an extreme lack of shared vision



# MN's Early Ed and Care Systems



## Minnesota Department of Education

- Programs reside in public schools
- Employs Licensed Teachers
- Licenses earned based on degrees completed, licensure exams passed, and required ongoing professional development



## Department of Human Services

- Programs reside in the community
- License Childcare settings
- Regulatory entity (enforcement of minimal standards)
- Focus on safety of children—basic building block that everything else is built upon

# MN's Early Ed and Care Systems

## Minnesota Department of Education

- ECFE
- EC Screening
- Head Start
- Part B & C
- Title I funding
- School Readiness
- [www.MNparentsknow.org](http://www.MNparentsknow.org)
- TEACHER LICENSING → → → →

## Department of Human Services

- Parent Aware (QRIS)
- Child Care Assistance Programs
- Friends, Family, & Neighbors Support
- Licensing of Childcare Centers (Rule 3)
- Licensing of Family Childcare Centers (Rule 2)
- ← ← ← ← ← EARLY CHILDHOOD PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT SYSTEM (non-credit training system)

# Lay of the Land

what is really going on...

- Wilder—Childcare Use (2009)
  - 39% 0-2 year olds and 61% of 3-5 year olds use licensed child care centers or homes for their primary care (DHS)
- Wilder-EC workforce in MN with related degrees (2011)
  - Preschools teachers: 62 %
  - Center-based Child Care teachers: 38%
  - Licensed Family Child Care: 10%
- Leadership—falling to districts (how many folks in districts working in EC have an EC background?)



# Challenges

## ○ Within ECEC Systems

- Access and availability issues
- Uneven requirements and funding for school- and community-based programs
- Underprepared workforce
- Wage inequities

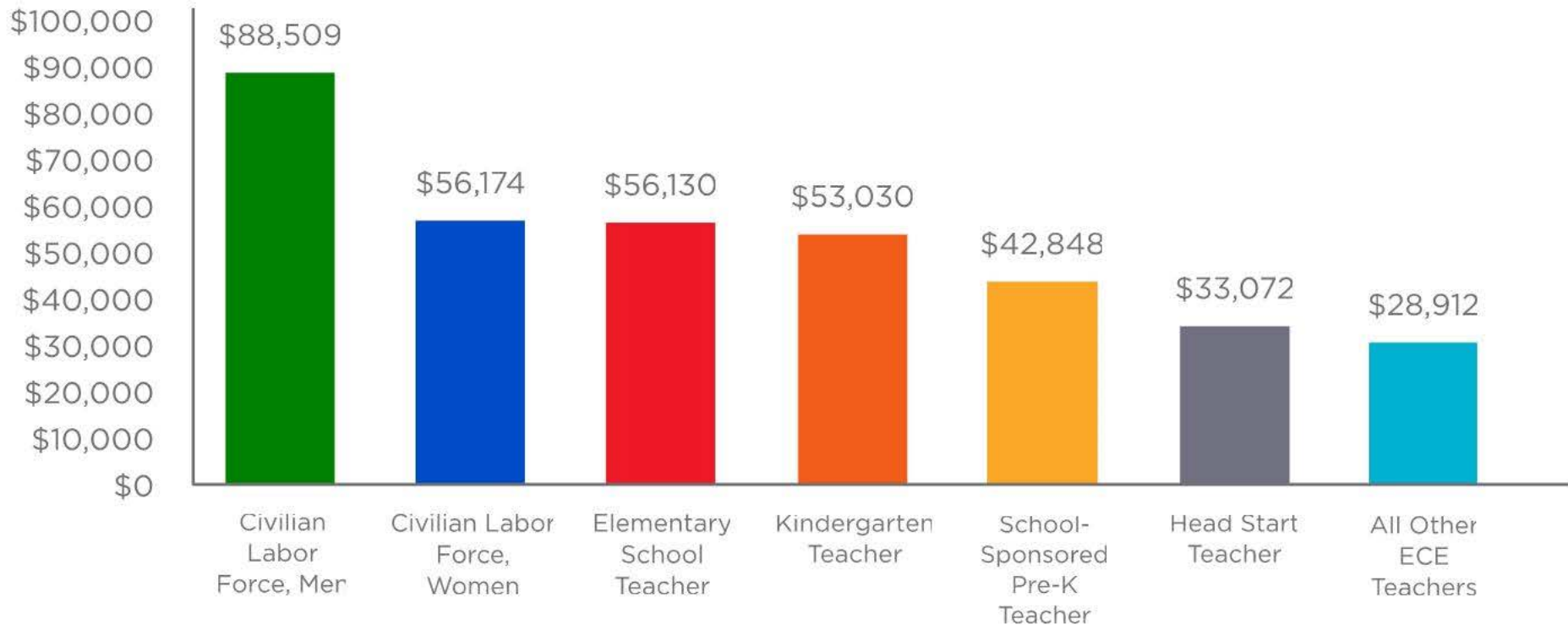
## ○ Within Higher Education

- Unaligned accountability systems
- Extreme barriers to articulation agreements
- Lack of quality practicum/student teaching placement sites
- Lack of connection/responsiveness between controlling agencies
- Difficulty accessing credentialed programs





## Average Annual Salaries for U.S. Labor Force Participants with Bachelor's Degrees or Higher, 2012




Whitebook, M. Phillips, D., & Howes, C. (2014). *Worthy Work, Still Unlivable Wages*.



# Moving Toward Alignment

- The separate investments of these agencies create disparate quality of experiences for children
- Our challenge is to find a way to align these separate systems
- What threads can we pull to weave these systems together?



# Opportunities

- Within ECEC Systems
  - Increase access and develop capacity through collaboration between school-based and community-based ECEC systems
  - Refinement of mixed-delivery ECEC systems
  - Develop framework for community-based program (Knowledge and Competency Framework)
- Within Higher Ed
  - Align non-credit and credit ECEC programs
  - Develop pathways for specialized knowledge certification and leadership development programs
  - Collaboration to create access to Bachelor Early Childhood License
  - Identify emerging needs of a ECEC system
- Funding Streams
  - Support components of quality programs
    - Increase in teacher wage
    - Blended resources (leveraged)
    - Facility and Equipment Resources




# Which Path Should We Take?

- Continue down the same path...
  - Decision-making in silos without considering economic and educational resource-sharing
  - Investment without coordination of ECEC & K-12
  - Systems developed without involvement of two-year and four-year institutions of higher education

OR

- A new path
  - Invest in program alignment and coordination
  - Complimentary school- and community-based programs




# Our Parallel Journey in Higher Ed

- Different Purposes/Goals
  - Technical Schools
  - Community Colleges
  - Universities

*“Higher ed is non-responsive to our needs and slow to change.”* (comment from recent MDE listening session)

- We answer to different Regulatory Agencies:  
MnSCU, BOT, MDE, DHS, MDH



# Impact of Recent Accountability Efforts for 4-yr Universities

- MN Board of Teaching changes
  - New licensing requirements
  - Increased standards AND specificity within those standards
  - Impact of MTLEs & edTPA
  - Rules about substituting courses

Agency with exclusive power over teacher licensure programs, without feedback loop or responsiveness to other institution and agency efforts

# Early Childhood Ed Teacher Licensure

What we know:

- 11 ECE licensure programs exist in MN:
  - Undergrad—10 (4 privates, 6 public)
  - Graduate—2 private, 1 public
- We are losing programs (Mankato and Bemidji)
- Discipline-specific knowledge has been subsumed by Elementary Ed preparation
- MN issues about 100 EC licenses per year




# Where do we go from here?

- What we don't know:
  - What is “good enough” for our youngest learners?
  - Is the current EC license ideal or should we try again?
  - Where can we find support to bring together various stakeholders to leverage their resources to address the needs of the state?
  - What will it take to transform and align Minnesota's ECEC preparation system?



# Lessons Learned

- Building relationships takes effort, but it is worth it.
- Being un-aligned creates huge inefficiencies in our state—and children are paying the price.
- Even our allies don't understand child development or the nature of our profession.
- There is strong willingness to work together to make things better.
- NOW IS THE TIME!



# Opportunities in Higher Ed

- Big Picture—Long Term
  - Transform the Early Childhood Workforce
  
- Mid-Term
  - Collaboration to provide access to EC teacher licensure program (need planning and implementation support)
  - Identify specialized knowledge certificate programs (e.g. Readiness and Transition Coordinator; Parent Engagement Liaison; Home Visiting; Cadre Coach/Mentor; ETC.)
  - Build intentionally scaffolded professional development system that includes IHEs and non-credit trainings.
  
- Short-Term
  - MDE grant to scaffold 2 year/4 year EC courses

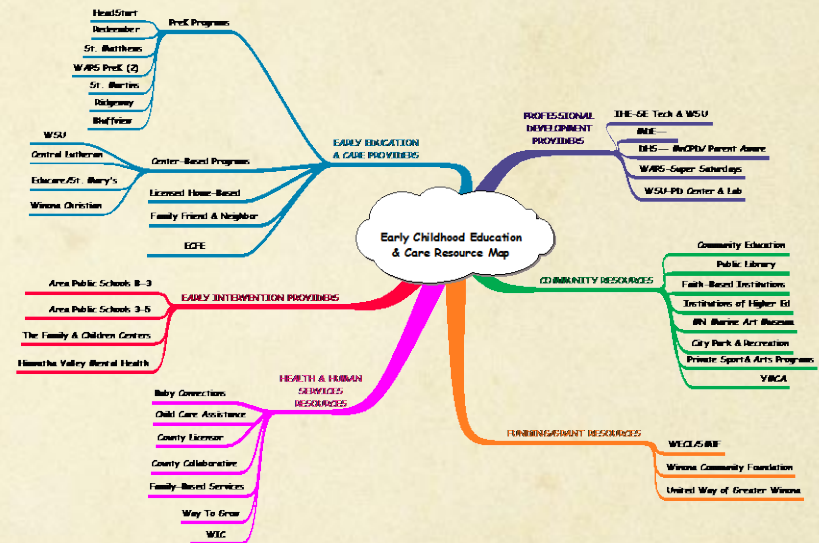
# We Should...

- **Increase availability and access to high-quality EC programs**
  - Align non-credit and credit based learning as a pathway for licensing teachers
  - Develop resources to support capacity building of quality programs in addition to resources that follow the child
  - Develop community or regional hubs for ongoing responsive professional development



# We Should...

- Invest in quality mixed-delivery systems
- Use community- and school-based assets and partnerships
- Include part-day, full-day options
- Include part-year, full-year programs



# We Should...

- Create/support well prepared Early Childhood teachers (address shortage of licensed EC teachers)
  - Need access to EC teacher prep programs (online/ collaborative approach)
  - Need comparable pay & benefits
  - Ongoing support for practicing teachers



From where you sit, what are  
your thoughts?



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